

Medical Economics and Public Health

The Prohibition Authorities, in a letter (Bulletin Los Angeles Medical Association), claim they have discovered "many startling conditions" in their investigations of the practice of doctors and druggists.

One of these "startling discoveries" is that "physicians have been careless about diagnosis" and "a vast number of prescriptions are issued without regard to medicinal necessity."

This may be so, but most sick people will still prefer the diagnosis and treatment given by a doctor to that of a revenue agent.

Another "startling discovery": It seems that the city of Long Beach has a local ordinance prohibiting the issuance of liquor on prescriptions. Therefore, the revenue agents, in the discharge of their doctor functions, cannot legally authorize the issuance of a prescription to a *resident* of Long Beach, *regardless of the location of the physician or the drug store*. Run your mind's eye around that and look at its potentialities.

Local ordinances in Los Angeles City permit a doctor to prescribe eight ounces for his patient. For the rest of the county sixteen ounces is the limit that the patient may have, the doctor prescribe, or the druggist dispense. In other words, a patient may be given *only the amount of medicine allowed by local ordinances of the town of his residence*. Under these interpretations of the law, if a *resident* of Long Beach were ill in a Los Angeles hospital (twenty miles away) and a doctor prescribed any liquor for him, the doctor, the patient, and the druggist who filled the prescription would be subject to arrest. If this Long Beach resident were ill in San Francisco and the doctor prescribed liquor for him, patient, doctor, and druggist would again be law violators. If a citizen of Los Angeles City is ill in Chicago his Illinois doctor may prescribe eight ounces of liquor, but no more, without violating the law. But if the patient's residence is in Los Angeles County, outside of Los Angeles or Long Beach, the Chicago doctor may prescribe sixteen ounces of liquor, but no more, without violating the practice of medicine as it happens to be conducted by law and the regulations of revenue agents.

All of which makes us think of the kitten and the ball of yarn.

"The functions of government cease with the protection of life and property and the enforcement of contract."

How far we have gone since any statesman could seriously propose these as the limits of government powers!

Now government can do, and does do, almost anything. It teaches the farmer to farm and the housewife to cook; it heaps up statistics, and it card-indexes the expectant mother; it fixes railroad fares and the length of bed sheets.

A contemporary, The National Spectator, printed the other day a touching instance of government omniscience and efficiency. The incident was related in an article describing the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor. Not long ago, it seems, a messenger boy dashed—if messenger boys do dash—into the Children's Bureau with a telegram which asked: "Shall I give my child castor oil?"

Was the bureau daunted? Not for a moment! The message swiftly passed from hand to hand; from chief to deputy chief, from director to associate director, until it reached a wise woman in the Division of Maternity and Infant Hygiene, who promptly advised the worrying mother whether she should or shouldn't.

A wise parental government which stands ready to advise and regulate our every activity. Its ready wisdom is at hand on any subject from the alimentary canal to the Panama Canal—from colon to Colon.—National Business (March).

Dodge County (Nebraska) Medical Society has an agreement with the county authorities by which the medical society takes charge of medical work for the poor

for \$1000 per month. Even more interesting, the thousand dollars a month is used to promote public health work, while the doctors who do the work receive nothing.

There is food for reflection in this item.

Dr. Ferrell's address before the American Public Health Association some months ago stirred up quite a hornet's nest.

It is not clear at this distance whether Dr. Ferrell, in promoting the interests of non-medical public health officers, made an unfortunate remark or prematurely exploded the bomb, the existence of which has been apparent to those who observed the trend of the times for some years.

Surely, the vast interests who are engaged in preparing non-medical people for public health service must find something for their graduates to do.

"Radical Propaganda under the guise of 'welfare' legislation is so alarmingly on the increase through federal centralization," relates Marian Bruce Clark (Dearborn Independent), "that the underlying motive must be exposed in all its nakedness to millions of American citizens who pay excessive taxes for the countless boards, commissions, 'special agencies,' and other bureaus existing solely for the purpose of socialistic control. There is a vast difference between constructive benevolence and communistic restraint; between industrial welfare and radical demands; between charity and peonage. Year after year the professional socialistic uplifter succeeds in piling up laws, in amending laws, and in obstructing laws, and by each succeeding step approaching nearer to the goal of the conscription of human rights.

We find the program thus arranged:

First. The "serving-without-salary" board or commission.

Second. State maintenance.

Third. The separate bureau or board.

Fourth. Centralization through federal bureaucratic control.

If such a program were to end with exorbitant taxes, coercion, and the breaking down of constitutional government, it would be bad enough, but it goes far deeper—it imposes a condition in which no man is master of his home because of the constant supervision of Government agents, it creates a nation of beggars, slackers, and irresponsibles who are taught to look to the Government for their every need. Teaching people to be dependent on the Government is one of the most insidious methods of destroying national morale.

The ultimate object of centralized federal control is socialistic.

The objective of socialism is communism.

The objective of communism is nationalization.

And the goal of nationalization is Sovietism.

Federal extension of power over our public utilities, our women, our children, and our private property rights through the misleading 'separate agency' plan leads to the establishment of bureaucratic boards, commissions, and other agencies that interpret their own laws, promulgate their own rules—often inconsistent with law—and administer their own finances, present the ever-increasing problem of the invasion of constitutional rights and the encroachment upon the prerogatives of private property and citizenship.

And when defeated in one corner these same people run to another corner and try to force the rejected thing on the United States, under guise of a local District of Columbia Act, it is time to call attention to it."

Platte County, Nebraska, is trying out an experiment by paying for medical services to the poor on an agreed upon fee basis, rather than have salaried doctors do the work.

This is not a new idea, but its potentialities are great.

The California Board of Medical Examiners is rendering the public a highly commendable service in their efforts to induce the San Francisco Telephone Company to make that part of the directory listing "physicians and surgeons" contain more information and less of the mis-

information which has heretofore been an outstanding feature of that publication.

The listings under "physicians and surgeons" of the November, 1925, issue of this so-called directory contains over thirty names that, speaking generously, should not be there.

The publication of this list and the reasons why they should not be included would make interesting reading, but in view of the fact that the Telephone Company at last is showing an inclination to make this department of their "classified directory" a little more accurately informative, we will withhold further comment for the present.

A physician who is capable of making health examinations in an efficient manner, and who tells his patients that he is ready to give this service, will never be charged with commercialism by any individual with the least spark of intelligence or enlightened self-interest. The American Medical Association has given its official sanction to this method of introducing periodic examinations, and has decided that it is in accord with the principles of medical ethics.

In educational literature addressed to the laity, organized medicine should point out the economic advantage of paying to the health examiner a fee commensurate with the value of his services.—*Atlantic Medical Journal*, February, 1926.

New Health Officer—W. P. Byron has been appointed Health Officer of Lemoore, Kings County, to succeed W. F. Edmonds.

Both are licensed to practice medicine and surgery in California, and are members of the California Medical Association.

Fred R. De Lappe of Modesto has been appointed County Physician and County Health Officer of Stanislaus County to succeed B. F. Surryhne. They are both members of the California Medical Association, and licensed to practice medicine and surgery in California.

The Michigan State Medical Society is discussing the question of increasing the number of nurses with limited training who will be available for the less serious illnesses, and the recommendation has been made, through a committee, that it would be advantageous to adopt methods for enlarging the number of such nurses.—*Journal Indiana Medical Association*.

For the first thirty-five days of the present year 443 cases of smallpox with 43 known deaths have been reported to the California State Board of Health.

Becton, Dickinson & Co. have issued an interesting pamphlet on the standardizing and care of hypodermic syringes, which contains valuable information.

With the increasing use of syringes in diagnosis and treatment, the selection, use and care of syringes and needles has increasing importance.

"Needles," according to this pamphlet, "are made from seamless high carbon steel, also from the non-rusting metals, such as gold, nickeloid, and platinum-iridium. As to the relative merits of these metals, it is largely dependent upon the purpose for which they are to be used.

"Needles made of high carbon steel and properly tempered will take a keener cutting edge than any other metal. They also possess greater strength and stand up better in use. That is why most physicians prefer them.

"Platinum-iridium needles, of 70 per cent platinum and 30 per cent iridium, such as we make, are quite hard, hold their points well and will not corrode or lose temper in the flame, provided they are not heated beyond a dull red color. They are also unaffected by chemicals. Platinum-iridium needles may be resharpened as often as is necessary, and if used with proper care will give good service.

"Gold and nickeloid needles are rustless and non-corrosive for most uses. They must, however, be sterilized by boiling, as they will not stand the flame; the metal being slightly softer than steel or platinum-iridium, the points are more easily dulled.

"Care of Hypodermic Needles—After using steel needles, they should be rinsed in alcohol or ether and

dried, either with compressed air or by the use of the B-D Brunet needle drier. A wire dipped in oil or vaseline should then be inserted. Steel needles treated in this way will last much longer and will not rust.

"When using platinum-iridium needles, the following caution should be observed: When sterilizing in flame, heat to a dull red, which is sufficient to kill any germ life. Long continued excessive heat renders the needles brittle. Avoid lateral pressure as far as possible while introducing, as bending back and forth soon weakens the walls of the needle and causes it to break or leak.

"Frequent honing of steel, platinum-iridium, gold, and nickeloid needles on an oilstone will keep the points smooth and increase their satisfactory usefulness."

The announcements of this company are found monthly in our advertising pages. See index of advertisers.

In its essence a bill now before the New York legislature "provides councils of medical men to whom the medical phases of disputed cases shall be referred, rather than to laymen who have not the knowledge and training to discern the wheat from the chaff in medical testimony. It is no more logical to refer medical points to a lawyer than law points to a physician." "Since Assemblyman Miller is a recognized authority on the Workmen's Compensation Law," says the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, editorially, "and consulted the chairmen of two committees of the Medical Society of the State of New York, there is a good prospect that the bill will pass; and if it does, there will be a minimum of disputes over doctors' bills for treating injured workmen."

Certain improvements are being made in some of the silver compounds, with the object of avoiding the irritating or staining features of the older silver compounds.

Neo-Silvol, a combination of silver iodide with a gelatinous protein, has been made impervious to the action of sunlight, so that its solutions (or suspensions) do not turn dark on exposure. Thus the staining effect of the silver is avoided. Bacteriologic tests, according to the manufacturers, Parke, Davis & Co., show that the germicidal activity of the new silver preparation is at least equal to that of pure carbolic acid; moreover, that, whatever the concentration of the solution, inflamed tissues are not irritated by its application.

The rumor that the R. L. Scherer Company is going out of business in San Francisco is unfounded. They have represented the Wappler Electric Company for over twelve years in this territory, and they expect to continue to do so, the Los Angeles store covering the southern part of the state and the San Francisco store the northern, as will be seen by their announcements each month in our advertising pages.

The Child Labor Amendment again—this time disguised in sheep's clothing as a District of Columbia welfare act. Professional friends of the child, well paid and well organized, are again striving for paternalistic and socialistic legislation. An apparently innocuous local bill that has dangerous national possibilities.—*Dearborn Independent*.

Golfers Rally for Trip to Southland Courses—The Golfers' Special provided for physicians attending the San Francisco Session in 1923 struck a most responsive chord. It will no doubt be pleasing news to all those with the golfing urge to learn that a similar train is being provided for the journey to Dallas. This train will leave Chicago, Sunday, April 11, and will provide six days of golf at famous Southern clubs. The general plan is to travel by night and have the days free for golfing and sight-seeing. Wives and children of physicians are welcomed on this trip, and special entertainment in the way of automobile drives, sight-seeing journeys, surf bathing, and oyster roasts will be provided. The train is run under the auspices of the Southern Pacific. For details, write to Dr. F. C. Warnshuis, Grand Rapids, Michigan.—*Journal A. M. A.*, March 6, 1926.

Among those enterprises which depend for success on implicit faith are love, democracy and hash.—*Detroit News*.